

## Two stars in the bassoon sky: metaconstructional compounds and metaphor extraction in Norwegian

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Recent years have witnessed “an empirical bent in metaphor research” (David 2017), where the constructional context has gained importance for metaphor extraction (David, Lakoff & Stickles 2016). At the same time, cognitive linguists have long been interested in the word-formation process of compounding, pointing out the relevance of metaphor and conceptual integration for compounds (Turner & Fauconnier 2002, Geeraerts 2002, Nessel & Sokolova to appear). The present study brings together these traditions, focusing on “metaconstructional compounds”. While such compounds are found in many languages, my material consists of examples from Norwegian. I suggest that metaconstructional compounds are always metaphorical, and that metaphor is evoked by the constructional context. It is argued that the semantic relations between heads and non-heads of compounds constitute a hierarchical system, where context-based metaphor may override conventional interpretations.

Consider *fagotthimmel* ‘bassoon sky’ in (1). This compound does not have a conventional interpretation, and it is hard to imagine a natural interpretation without context. However, the context specifies that two young bassoonists are “stars in the bassoon sky”, which facilitates the interpretation of the compound. The head of the compound, *himmel* ‘sky’, evokes a metaphor together with *stjerne* ‘star’ in the context. The non-head *fagott* ‘bassoon’ functions as a “topical anchor”, connecting the metaphor to the discourse topic (recruiting young bassoonists). Compounds of this type are metaconstructional in the sense that they place one construction, the morphological compound construction, “on top of” a syntactic construction available in the context. The role of the context is clearer in *sjakkskygge* ‘chess shadow’ in (2), where the construction *leve i skyggen av noen* ‘(lit.) live in someone’s shadow’ evokes the metaphor that someone is overshadowed, while the topical anchor *sjakk* ‘chess’ relates the metaphor to the discourse topic – chess.

While metaconstructional compounds are most often unconventional words like *fagotthimmel* and *sjakkskygge*, my material also contains conventional compounds like *kjøkkenhåndkle* ‘kitchen towel’ in (3), which normally denotes a towel used in a kitchen. However, in a newspaper article about the bankruptcy of a kitchen store, the noun is used in the context “throwing in the kitchen towel”, where the context forces a metaphoric interpretation, which changes the semantic relation between head and non-head from “used in” to “about” since *kjøkken* ‘kitchen’ represents the topic of the newspaper article. Arguably, the “about” relation occupies a privileged position in a hierarchical system of relations between heads and non-heads, where it overrides other relations when triggered by metaphor.

My analysis of the Norwegian data is the first step in a larger investigation of metaconstructional compounds. The preliminary analysis shows the theoretical importance of such compounds, which both inform empirical metaphor research and the study of word-formation in cognitive linguistics.

- (1) Dei er likevel berre to små stjerner på ein bekmørk fagott-himmel. (NRK online news service) ‘They are nevertheless no more than two small stars in a pitch-dark bassoon sky.’
- (2) Stormester J. L. Hammer har lenge levd i sjakkskyggen til verdensener M. Carlsen. ‘Grandmaster J. L. Hammer has for a long time lived in the chess shadow of the number one world champion Magnus Carlsen.’ (NRK online news service)
- (3) Kaster inn kjøkkenhåndkleet  
Throwing in the kitchen towel (newspaper headline, *Østlendingen* August 1, 2017)

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